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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: POLITICAL ROUNDUP JUNE 13

REF: ABUJA 934

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER; REASON: 1.5 (B)
and (D).

[1](#)1. (U) THIS PERIODIC JOINT POLITICAL REPORT FROM ABUJA AND
LAGOS INCLUDES:

[1](#)2.
--ELECTION TRIBUNALS UPDATE
--WABARA FOR SENATE PRESIDENT
--VIOLENCE-FREE INAUGURATION
--DO THE JUNE 20 ELECTIONS MATTER?
--VIOLENCE IN ADAMAWA STATE

ELECTION TRIBUNALS UPDATE

[1](#)2. (U) The election tribunals continue to hear cases. Several relatively minor cases have been thrown out on various technicalities. In the lone election to be annulled so far, a tribunal in Edo State rejected PDP House of Representatives candidate Jun Adun's victory and awarded the seat to his ANPP challenger, Amen Osunde. Though many elections face challenges in the tribunals, the House and Senate already held their opening sessions and selected the legislative leadership. Both houses have adjourned until June 24.

WABARA FOR SENATE PRESIDENT

[1](#)3. (C) Although at the center of an election fracas over his reelection, PDP Senator Aldolphus Wabara was chosen last week as the new Senate President. INEC originally announced ANPP candidate Dan Imo as the winner of the Abia South-Central Senatorial seat. President Obasanjo even sent Imo a congratulatory message. Nevertheless, on June 2, the Federal High Court in Abuja ordered INEC to change course and certify Wabara as the victor. Imo has asked the High Court to vacate its order. The High Court has not yet responded to Imo and the case is still pending before an election tribunal. For the moment, Wabara has assumed his post as Senate President. Meanwhile, Justice Egbo Egbo, who issued the ruling to INEC, has been called before a tribunal headed by Supreme Court Chief Justice Uwais.

VIOLENCE-FREE INAUGURATION

[1](#)4. (U) Despite calls by some in the opposition parties for "mass action" to derail President Obasanjo's May 29 inauguration, Nigeria was calm and peaceful and the inaugural activities nearly hitch-free throughout. In anticipation of disturbances on the day of inauguration, large numbers of troops and police were deployed in Abuja and other major population centers. The National Assembly convened its inaugural session without problem. There were no reported incidents of large-scale violence or protests. After having their attempts to thwart the inauguration through legal maneuvering rejected by the Courts, opposition parties now await rulings from the various electoral tribunals. Detailed analysis of the opposition and its options will follow septel.

DO THE JUNE 20 ELECTIONS MATTER?

[1](#)5. (C) Conventional wisdom is that local government elections would take place on June 20 in all 36 states. However, since

the timing of the elections is controlled by each state, elections in several states could be postponed due to political or logistical considerations (NOTE: LGA elections were originally scheduled for March 2002. END NOTE.) There have been reports in the domestic media and from mission sources that predict several governors will either delay or cancel LGA elections in their states.

16. (C) COMMENT: In addition to "election fatigue," creation of new LGAs might be the driving force behind election delays or cancellations in some states. Currently, Nigeria has 774 constitutionally mandated LGAs. Funds for each of these LGAs are earmarked by the Federal Government as a portion of the monies it disburses to the states. Since newly created LGAs will not receive these earmarked Federal monies they could be more easily controlled by the state governors who control their access to funding. Governors who advocate creating new LGAs will seek to delay elections until they can do so. Governor Makarfi of Kaduna State is attempting to create 25 new Local Government Areas and has declared his intention to cancel the upcoming elections. Several other states have also announced intentions to create new LGAs.

17. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: At the national level, the LGA elections have little more impact than providing an opportunity for sitting governors to solidify their control of their respective states. Whether a state holds LGA elections on June 20 or delays them depends largely on whether having elections sooner or later (or not at all) will be more advantageous to the chief executive of the state concerned. END COMMENT.

VIOLENCE IN ADAMAWA STATE

18. (C) There was an outbreak of religious/communal violence in Numan, Adamawa State on June 8. According to newspaper and radio reports, eight people were killed during a riot sparked when a non-local Muslim "water hawker" stabbed a female Christian evangelist during an argument over the cost of a jerry can of water. A mosque and "several other places of worship" reportedly were razed during the riot. A dusk-to-dawn curfew has been in effect since Sunday, June 8, and there have been no further reports of violence in the area. (COMMENT: This incident is illustrative of the underlying religious tension in many Nigerian communities. Religion may have only played a minor role in the event that caused this eruption but it was enough to provoke widespread violence this community. Fortunately, this incident was localized and brought quickly under control. There is no indication the violence in Numan has significantly raised the level of tension in other areas of Adamawa state, or neighboring areas, or other states in Nigeria. END COMMENT.)
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